

Fishing anyone?



JAN KATZ ACKERMAN/Colby Free Press

Brandon Carver of Hoxie cast a line hoping a fish would be tempted by his bate last weekend at Sheridan State Lake about 10 miles east of Hoxie.

Life in the Flint Hills is love

LAWRENCE (AP) — It's happened to every Kansan.

While driving through the Flint Hills with someone from outside the state, someone who better knows tall buildings, busy beaches or cute boutiques, the conversation turns to the grass-covered hills visible through the window.

Inevitably, the passenger asks: How can anyone stand to live here?

Indeed, the Flint Hills are an acquired taste.

To most, perhaps, they are unbearably plain; to others, they are unmatched in their beauty.

But it's a beauty that's more subtle than breathtaking.

"I tell people the Flint Hills are not spectacular," said Jim Hoy, an English professor at Emporia State University who grew up on a ranch

outside of Cassoday.

"They're not about spectacle, they're about serenity.

In his new book, "Flint Hills Cowboys," Hoy, 66, lets the Flint Hills speak for themselves and for their rugged inhabitants.

"This is cowboy country," he wrote in the introduction.

"In my mind's eye, I see the big old Texas steers of my youth, the open-range roads, the cattle guards, the railroad stockyards.

"I hear the click of the horseshoes on flinty rock and see sparks from their hooves while riding home across nighttime pastures after loading cattle onto trains."

For more than 20 years, Hoy has collected oral histories from the regions old-timers.

"You could write a lot of differ-

ent kinds of books about the Flint Hills — the oil culture, the small towns, whatever," he said.

"I just focus on the cattle part of it, the cowboy part of it."

His cast of characters, none of them famous, includes Lou Hart, a cowhand poet whose poem, "Springtime at Crockers," was recited for 50 years before reaching print in 1958; Bud Gillette, once thought to be the world's fastest man; Mary Ann Clark, a woman who forgave her husband's murderer after her son spent 12 years bringing him to justice; and then there's John Badger and his brother Granville, who became local legends for their honesty, horsemanship and hard work.

"It's like any good book. It sings," Day said.

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People coping with schizophrenia

WICHITA (AP) — When her schizophrenia was at its worst, Vicky Collins carried a stuffed rabbit everywhere.

The rabbit, Velvie, made her feel more secure, even if people stared.

When voices told her to kill herself, Collins would clutch the soft, brown rabbit with the red velvet dress.

Her longtime friend Kevin Bomhoff remembers the stuffed bunny.

"I noticed when she stopped carrying the (rabbit) and started carrying books," he said.

That's about the time Collins started getting better.

Academia replaced Velvie as Collins' security blanket. And the voices — while they still speak sometimes — became quieter.

Collins — a daughter, a sister and a social worker — wants you to know a few things about mental illness:

- You can get better.
- You can be successful.
- You can make up for the years you lost.

Collins, 47, lost about 20 of them. Around the age most people are engrossed in their first jobs or starting families, Collins was a patient at a mental hospital.

Now she works full time, teaches and has a master's degree in social work.

Her diagnosis is schizoaffective disorder with a borderline personality disorder.

She suffers from symptoms of

schizophrenia and depression.

Schizophrenia is a disease of the brain with symptoms such as delusions, hallucinations and withdrawal. Many people with the disease have trouble expressing thoughts. Their speech can be difficult to understand.

The man accused of killing 17-year-old Quik Trip clerk Brian Hall last month in Wichita had schizophrenia, his family says.

Anthony Ray Barnes, 40, is accused of first-degree murder and aggravated assault. His sisters said he had stopped taking his medication before the shooting occurred.

Comcare of Sedgwick County, which provides mental health services, says 14 percent of the nearly 5,200 adults undergoing treatment there have one of six types of schizophrenia.

News of the shooting saddened Collins.

"Never would I harm another person," she said. "If I was in the

public and thought that about schizophrenics, I'd be scared, too."

Collins had symptoms of schizophrenia as a young woman, but she didn't know she had a disease.

"I knew I had problems, but I didn't know to put a name to it," she said.

As a senior in high school, she went from being an honor student to flunking out. She had trouble concentrating and organizing her thoughts.

She attempted college but landed on academic probation.

She had migraines and began seeing a neurologist. At 20, she tried to kill herself.

She says the voices that spoke to her were ruthless and persistent. They told her, over and over, to kill herself.

Over the years, Collins also has spent time in the psychiatric unit of a Wichita hospital and at Comcare's "partial" hospital, a structured day-time therapeutic program.



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